

Leader of Southern Illinois Drug Operation Sentenced to 30 Years in Federal Prison for Trafficking Cocaine

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EAST ST. LOUIS – Ruben Caraway, 46, described as "the ringleader" of a Houston-based cocaine trafficking operation has been sentenced in the Southern District of Illinois to federal prison for conspiracy to distribute cocaine, bringing to a successful

close an investigation and prosecution that spanned several states and more than five years.

On Tuesday, June 21, 2022, Caraway, 46, was sentenced to 360 months in prison and five years of supervised release for his role in a drug trafficking conspiracy that resulted in the seizure of \$1.2 million dollars in cash, \$72,000 in jewelry, and several kilos of cocaine. Caraway was captured in Texas in July 2021, after being a fugitive for more than three and a half years.

An indictment filed on January 4, 2018, charged that Caraway was the leader of a Houston-based group responsible for distributing more than \$4 million dollars' worth of cocaine throughout Texas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and Georgia. Caraway and eight co-defendants were named in the indictment. The United States also seized \$1,212,934 in U.S. currency, along with jewelry appraised at \$72,000.

All the other defendants previously pleaded guilty, and Caraway was the last member of the group to be sentenced. Each of his co-defendants also received significant prison sentences – Victor Johnson (188 months), Sammy Monroe (168 months), Rodney Smith (147 months), Dana Bell (87 months), Nahum Shibeshi (48 months), Astin Allison (151 months), Terrance Miles (121 months) and Jamie Green (262 months) – after it was determined that they were responsible for trafficking approximately 120 kilos of cocaine into Southern Illinois.

This investigation was conducted as part of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF). The OCDETF initiative brings federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and resources together to identify, target and dismantle large national and international drug trafficking organizations. The investigation was conducted by agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Steven D. Weinhoef and David D. Dean.